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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 003199

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINS PHUM TU

SUBJECT: CABINET SHUFFLES AND THE LONG SQUEEZE: PM ERDOGAN

SETS HIS SIGHTS ON FONMIN GUL

(U) Classified by Polcounselor John Kunstadter; reasons: E.O. 12958 1.4 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary: Long rumored to be considering a cabinet re-shuffle, PM Erdogan has made his first move suddenly and in limited fashion. However, in a trademark sudden move, PM Erdogan announced the replacement of three ministers in a mini-Cabinet shuffle June 4. Cabinet changes have been made in the Energy, Agriculture, and Public Works portfolios. The new Minister of Energy Hilmil Guler told a close contact of ours that Erdogan appointed as Minister of Agriculture Mehmet Mehdi 1), a Diyarbakir MP from a prominent local family with high status in the Nakliye Bank. An AKP xxxx and two other long-term Embassy contacts with deep relations in AKP describe Eker as a decent but passive man, close to Erdogan. The new Minister of Public Works is Trabzon MP Faruk Nafiz 2) (umlaut over the O). Born Trabzon 1946. Civil engineering degree from Karabuk. A fellow Trabzon contractor and Trabzonspor board member describes Ozak as coming from the Sufi (mystical) line of the Milli Gorus Islamic Movement. Istanbul Second District MP Nemet 3) is the new State Minister for Women's Affairs. Born Ayranci (Ankara) 1965. Grew up in relatively well-off family. Cubukcu is focused, highly ambitious, and months ago made clear to us she sought the state minister position. She has ensured that she will be well-placed to succeed Erdogan if he becomes president. With the dismissal of Guclu and these appointments Erdogan has shown more clearly that he intends to whittle down Gul's influence. By the time Erdogan becomes president, Gul will be a distant memory. Contacts such as Prime Ministry advisor xxxx who has provided a wealth of accurate insights into AKP, foresee a high possibility that Erdogan may also be aiming over time to remove Gul's close associate State Minister Atalay and Minister of Justice and government spokesman.